

ARMS 564

RECORD TYPE: FEDERAL (NOTES MAIL)

CREATOR:Debbie S. Fiddelke (CN=Debbie S. Fiddelke/OU=CEQ/O=EOP [CEQ])

CREATION DATE/TIME: 4-MAR-2003 08:32:28.00

SUBJECT:: Cong Daily article

TO:HobgoodTD@state.gov (HobgoodTD@state.gov [UNKNOWN])

READ:UNKNOWN

TEXT:

Wanted to make sure you saw this...

ENVIRONMENT

Democrats Tell U.N. Bush Policies Violate Climate Treaty

YYYYYHouse and Senate Democratic aides last week urged the United Nations to find the Bush administration in violation of the Rio Convention, an international treaty creating the first international system to address climate change, sources close to the issue say.

YYYYYAlthough U.N. officials did not directly address the claims during the meeting, sources said they were receptive to the Democrats' critiques and appeared to be familiar with the potential problems with the administration's climate activities. The meeting with the U.N. environmental experts was set up by the State Department for congressional staff members.

YYYYYUnder the Rio Convention -- which was signed by President Bush's father, former President Bush -- the United States is required to take actions to reduce concentrations of carbon dioxide, considered the principal cause of climate change.

YYYYYLast year, the administration released its Climate Action Report, in which it said the United States is taking steps to meet its treaty obligations, an assertion Democrats claim is false.

YYYYY"Its simply not true," one Democratic staffer said, noting the White House opposes mandatory controls on CO2 as well as the Kyoto Protocol.

YYYYYA Democratic source said aides outlined out a number of areas in which the administration has potentially violated the accord. In addition to Bush's refusal to back mandatory controls on CO2, the administration has proposed maintaining a tax loophole that could allow people to write-off the cost of an SUV, but has not backed similar credits for low-emissions vehicles.

YYYYYThe source also noted that while the administration has proposed a modest increase in federal fuel efficiency standards and an expanded federal hydrogen fuel research budget, the climactic effects of these efforts will not be felt for decades.

YYYYYAt the same time, one source also said the Energy Information Administration reportedly has informed the United Nations that voluntary measures to address climate change have proven largely unsuccessful. If true, EIA's determination could further undermine the administration's claims of compliance, because its climate program is based solely on voluntary emissions cuts by industry.

YYYYYAs a side issue, Democrats were outraged that Senate Environment and Public Works Chairman Inhofe sent Christopher Horner -- an attorney with the Competitive Enterprise Institute -- as his representative to the United Nations meeting.

yyyyyHorner, who has worked for several years on the issue of climate change, is a vocal opponent of the Kyoto Protocol and other mandatory climate schemes. He also has represented Inhofe in litigation against the Bush administration charging the White House violated federal data quality laws when it found that human activities cause climate change.

yyyyyOne Democrat said Horner's presence at the meeting was "unheard of," likening it to former House Speaker Gingrich's decision to provide office space to industry lobbyists working on Clean Water Act reform issues.

yyyyyBut a source with Inhofe's office rejected the charges, noting State Department officials who set up the U.N. meeting never explicitly told the chairman it was a staff-only session. The source also noted that "the chairman is a vehement opponent to Kyoto as well," and that felt Horner's presence at the meeting was appropriate. By John Stanton